

# Bosnia & Herzegovina: 28 perfins amidst confusion

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**B**osnia and Herzegovina have been very much in the news in recent months. American troops are stationed in Bosnia. It's wise to remember that it was an assassination in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia & Herzegovina, that sparked the first world war.

Bosnia gets its name from the Bosna River; Herzegovina gets its name from the German title *Herzog*, or *Duke*.

The *World Perfins Catalog* lists 28 perfins from Bosnia & Herzegovina. Most of them have been positively identified. One pattern (HSF), believed to have been used by Handels-gesellschaft, is known but no copy was available for catalog illustration.

The nine patterns shown here remain unidentified.

Bosnia & Herzegovina has never been a secure part of the world. The two provinces were part of the ancient Roman province of Illyria (along with Albania and the province of Kosovo, which is very much in the news today). When the Roman Empire collapsed, the Goths overran the area. The Slavs came during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Croats later, and then, about 1100, the Magyars. From 1463 until 1878, the area was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Before 1846, there was no postal service in the region. From 1846 to 1848, a merchant by the name of Spiridon Rajnovic operated a private mail service between Bosnisch-Brod and Sarajevo. After an unsuccessful rebellion against Ottoman rule in 1851, Ottoman governor Omar Pascha established five post offices—at Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Bihac, and Livno. Offices were later established at Travnik and Brod and at Novi-Pazar. These offices remained open until 1878 and used regular Turkish stamps. In addition, the Austrian

consular service operated a post office in Sarajevo. It operated until 1879.

Following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, the Russians honored a secret agreement which allowed Austro-Hungarian troops to occupy Bosnia & Herzegovina. This was a payback to the Empire for staying out of the Russo-Turkish war.

Bosnia & Herzegovina remained "occupied territory" until they were formally annexed into the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908.

From July 1878 until January 1879, there was no postal service available to civilians in the two provinces. Only military postal units operated to keep the flow of official mail moving. In mid-January 1879, the military field postal service was expanded and

opened to civilians. Both Austrian and Hungarian stamps were used.

On July 1, 1879, Bosnia & Herzegovina issued their first stamps (Scott #1 wasn't issued until 1894, so Scott #2 was probably the first stamp). Because the Austro-Hungarian parliament couldn't agree on which language to use on the stamps, Bosnia & Herzegovina didn't get their names on a stamp until 1906.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed in 1918 and Bosnia & Herzegovina were united with Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slovenia to form the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The kingdom collapsed in 1945 when Marshal Josip Broz Tito seized power. He maintained his hold on the country until he died in 1980. After that, the country began to split into separate countries based on ethnic and historical lines.

**I**n a 1975 note in the *Perfins Bulletin*, Jan Prins said that supplies of the 1906 issue of Bosnia & Herzegovina were found in Sarajevo in 1918, "defaced with punches [two big holes]," and distributed to officials of the new Yugoslav government as souvenirs. Can anyone confirm that story?



Can you help identify any of these patterns? From top left to right, WPC A2 used in Sarajevo, A8, A13, A18 believed used in Zagreb, A21, A23, A24, A25 used in Sarajevo, and A26 used in Tuzla. If you have any information, please contact the foreign catalog chairman.

## For further information consult

The European Section of the *World Perfins Catalog*, edited by Robert J. Schwerdt, and *The Perfins of Austria*, compiled by John Nussbickel. Both are available from the Perfins Club. Check also *This is Philately*, by Kenneth A. Wood, Van Dahl Publications, Albany, OR, 1983.